

using raw numbers rather than population-corrected murder rates, which thus failed to correct for a 20 percent decrease in D.C. population during the study period, and treating justifiable and excusable homicides, including those by police officers, as if they were murders in compiling the study. Nice research, eh?

The pamphlet also discusses fallacies about semi-automatic guns (so-called “assault weapons,” a masterful bit of falsehood in labeling). “The California Attorney General’s Office,” says the pamphlet — referring, it should be noted up front, to that of John Van de Kamp, not of Dan Lungren — “conducted two state-wide studies of the use of ‘assault weapons’ in crime. Both the 1988 Helsley and the 1990 Johnson studies showed that such guns were almost never used in crime, even in the major centers of drug crime” for the common sense reason that “criminals prefer concealable weapons, not big rifles and shotguns.”

So what did Van de Kamp do with these inconvenient findings? His office “denied the existence of the studies” until they were leaked to the press. Well, if doctors can lie about research, should we be surprised to find politicians doing the same?

### Tirso del Junco Sings Flat

DR. TIRSO del Junco, the state GOP’s new chairman began his two-year term with a few sour notes at the state convention that elected him in February. His initial news conference consisted mainly of repeated

statements that he did not want a state Party fixated on social issues. He talked about his personal opposition to abortion, pledging not to let it interfere with his running of the Party. He went to great lengths to decry the “divisiveness” these issues had caused and to remind everyone of how determined he was to avoid dwelling on them. By the time he’d finished, there was nothing much for reporters to write about except the Party’s divisions over social issues, since the good doctor had mentioned little else. Lesson: if you want to emphasize, say, economic issues, talk about *them*, not about those things you say you plan to ignore.

But better than that would be a short course with former Senator and RNC Chairman William E. Brock who presided, as national chairman, over the resurgence of the national GOP between the dark days of defeat to Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Ronald Reagan’s smashing victory four years later. When Brock took over in 1977, he found the party “largely bereft,” he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* late last year, “of those tools essential to any successful party, a strong grounding in principles and ideas, and a broad and diverse base of support.” Parties build broad and diverse bases of support by standing up for their *principles* in just this way, not by listing — for the media, no less! — all the issues party leaders wish would go away.

Brock concluded by quoting Teddy Roosevelt: “The one indispensable requisite of both an individual and a nation is character.” “This is no less true,” Brock commented, “of a political party.” Amen to that. CPR

## The Working Press

# So Damn Politically Correct

But Beyond the Victimology One Occasionally Still Finds Some News

Tim W. Ferguson

DAY AFTER day, the *Los Angeles Times* is so damn politically correct that it’s become a bad self-parody. Victimology is everywhere, except when it comes to casualties of street crime, which is generally downplayed. Blacks, Latinos, aggrieved Asians and women are always

fighting for social justice, especially in the “View” (lifestyle) section. The entertainment department long ago dispensed with evenhandedness in the cultural wars. Sometimes the worst thing about the *Times*’ liberalism is that it’s just so tired. The Sunday “Calendar” magazine devoted its April 11 cover to “Theater Fights Back:

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How new defiant voices are battling AIDS from the stages of America." Anyone attending contemporary urban productions over the last decade could not have avoided being bombarded with every homosexual plaint in Christendom. Where's the news? ....

WHILE THE *Times* is predictable, the much-maligned *San Francisco Chronicle* rarely fails to come up with at least one story daily that is worth clipping. Washington correspondent Carolyn Lochhead and economics writer Jonathan Marshall are particular founts for reference. Lochhead was early in deflating the notion that Bill Clinton enjoyed overwhelming support in Silicon Valley for his tax-and-spend plan. Marshall, much like Robert Samuelson in *Newsweek*, cites statistics that puncture myth and quotes resource economists that challenge political orthodoxy. The *Chronicle* also had good trend stories on the increasing use of arrests in "domestic abuse" cases (it didn't, however, note the effect on jail crowding) and the intimidation of Asians in the city's public-housing projects, apparently by blacks. The *Chronicle* also did some skeptical reporting on the value of Bay Area military bases subject to closure ....

That detachment contrasted with the civic reveille sounded on the base-closing issue by the *Orange County Register*, whose news department all but implored local congressmen to be feistier in heading off a shutdown of the suddenly beloved El Toro Marine air base. This was the latest example of how the *Register* newsroom, perhaps trying to atone for the libertarian-conservative slant imposed on it in years past, has become a megaphone for the local government establishment, except on petty corruption stories ....

The *Register* also devoted space to a logo'd series of articles on Black History Month, an annual nationwide commemoration that itself was an early manifestation of P.C. sentiment. Why this event was of particular noteworthiness in Orange County, where Latinos and Asians far outnumber blacks, can probably be better explained by a desire to re-educate the benighted suburbanites than by traditional news judgment ....

THE *SACRAMENTO BEE*, as the *Washington Post* of the state capital, reports more of the ins-and-outs of government there than any other medium (although often from the perspective of the Democrat legislative staff, same as in D.C.). But regularly some state political story has a hook outside the Capitol dome and some-

body else bites. This was true when the *Chronicle* found that public opposition was blocking the establishment of marine preserves mandated by the Gill Net Initiative of 1990. Seems the fishermen, divers, and surfers who supported that apple-pie measure didn't contemplate the possibility that some of their favorite stretches of coastline would be put off-limits to all but scientists, and are now fighting four such designations ....

Regionalism has its prerogatives, and one of them is the cause of progressive Republicanism on the San Francisco peninsula. Former Representative Tom Campbell remains a god to folks like *Chronicle* columnist Jerry Roberts, whose sources in Hewlett-Packardville still cannot fathom why he lost the Senate primary to Bruce Herschensohn. Campbell is, of course, engaged in a national drive to rid the Party of its social-issue stigma. In this quest, he draws state press grief only from the old Herschensohn partisans at the *Orange County Register's* editorial page. A more complete free ride continues to be enjoyed by Kathleen Brown, the unspecific state treasurer who says she wants to restore direction to, and belief in, California. But where will you get the tax money, Kathleen? Finally, we've read little anywhere about Barbara Boxer, which is a relief ....

FEW PRESS accounts have grappled with the explosion in welfare claims, which along with the imprisonment binge is what's destroying Pete Wilson's budgets. The *Los Angeles Times* flashed the news that Medi-Cal spending had risen an extraordinary 36 percent last year, then dropped the ball. The *San Bernardino Sun* drew a bead on the fact that one third of the city was on the dole, and probably half if you counted jobless and workers comp benefits. A collective failure to detail the handout crisis, probably because of its unpleasant political connotations, doubtless played a role in the defeat of Proposition 165 last November and the state's continuing fiscal helplessness ....

The school-voucher initiative will be the most ideologically loaded issue on the June 1994 ballot, and it will be interesting (and surely discouraging) to see how the press handles the teacher-union propaganda. There were signs that United Teachers-Los Angeles wore out their welcome a bit in fighting for salaries at the expense of everything else, including kids' books; the *L.A. Daily News* has been notably tough on the union. But in general the instructors' sad refrain gets a respectful hearing. The horrors of low pay, big classes, and slothful admin-

istrators were put in perspective, however, by a *Chronicle* photo showing applicants waiting in line at a teacher job fair in San Jose. The queues are even longer whenever municipalities test for police and fire openings. What gives? ....

Finally, so as to give the *L.A. Times* its due, let us note a few highlights: A front-pager by (now departed) Tracy Wood on how contractors benefitting from minority set-asides were raking it in from the riot cleanup;

a Glenn Bunting dispatch from Washington on how Senate crustacean Robert Byrd had “dissed” Dianne Feinstein on his Appropriations Committee because she spoke kindly of a line-item veto; a rare bit of mass-transit revisionism by Nora Zamichow that noted how rail planners across the U.S. play high-ball/low-ball with ridership estimates to keep the green coal coming; and a needed takedown of the vile message of the Michael Douglas movie “Falling Down” — in, of all places, “Calendar”!

## Educational Finance

# What Price Zero Tuition?

Those who *get* something that is costly should *pay* for it.

William R. Allen

“ZERO TUITION in state schools is a *right*. The people of California owe students free education in the University of California.” Such words, penned by young scholars, can be found regularly in the pages of the UCLA *Daily Bruin*. Their authors are reasoning, perhaps, from the premise that the best things in life are free. But if those best things really *are* free, then higher education qualifies as only a second-best commodity, for free it is not. Who should pay for college?

In state schools, students are charged only a modest fraction of the costs. But in California, that fraction has been growing. Fees in the University of California have much more than doubled in the last half dozen years. They may be raised next year to more than \$4,000 for state residents (and about three times that much for out-of-state customers). This, predictably, has distressed young scholars, moving some to metaphysical pronouncements that virtually zero-priced education is a right bestowed by a college-loving deity. Also, there is a parasitic tradition against tuition at state colleges: *one* tradition even campus rebels defend, for their own pocketbooks are at stake. But the tradition violates a sound principle: those who *get* something that is costly should *pay* for it.

Zero tuition is a public subsidy. The considerable re-

sources involved have many alternative uses. In a world of scarcity, we cannot provide everything to everyone below cost. It is naive to presume that *particular* members of this *particular* social group should be subsidized and should receive this *particular* amount of this *particular* gift.

Even if naive, taxpayers have been generous to public colleges. And communities have received at least a gross, whether or not a net, payoff from their investments which have given us a general population that includes many more college graduates, presumably, than it would if the investments had not been made. But students are *twice*-blessed. They benefit in this general way over the years as members of the community. But in addition, as students, they receive training costing many times what they pay in fees and ultimately returning to them an income many times greater than the educational cost. As members of society, they will pay taxes, of course — but all members pay taxes, whether or not they go to state colleges and thus receive the additional benefits that go specifically to students.

THE BULK of the students come from relatively high social-economic levels. The poor provide a share of tax payments which is larger than their proportion of college students, on balance subsidizing the wealthy to go

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